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**The situation in the Middle East**

## Letter dated 28 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the statement on the Middle East peace process issued on 26 October 1998 by the Presidency of the European Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly.

*(Signed)* Ernst **Sucharipa**
Permanent Representative of Austria
to the United Nations

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# Annex

[Original: English and French]

## Statement on the Middle East peace process issued on 26 October 1998 by the Presidency of the European Union

The European Union warmly welcomes the signing in Washington on 23 October 1998 of the Wye River Memorandum between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Chairman Yasser Arafat. The European Union congratulates Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat for their courage and sense of responsibility and pays tribute to the important contribution of President Clinton and Secretary of State Albright to this successful outcome, as also to the personal support lent by King Hussein of Jordan. This breakthrough opens the door to the early resumption of the negotiations on permanent status as foreseen in the Oslo Accords, as well as to the implementation of outstanding commitments under the Interim Agreement.

The European Union welcomes this forward movement in the peace process and looks forward to the speedy implementation of the Agreement. It recognizes that this will require a sustained political commitment by the parties and the determination to resist extremists and other wishing to frustrate progress towards peace.

The European Union now calls upon the parties to complete negotiations as soon as possible on those remaining issues under the Interim Agreement which have still not been settled, to start negotiations without delay on final status and, at the same time, to avoid all unilateral acts which could prejudice the final outcome, thus building confidence, which is essential for a lasting peace in the region. It attaches importance also to the early revival of the Syrian and Lebanese tracks in order to arrive at a comprehensive settlement among all parties to the conflict.

The European Union reiterates its firm commitment to a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East based on the Madrid and Oslo accords. It welcomes the continuing positive contribution being made by its Special Envoy, Ambassador Moratinos. The European Union has much to offer to the success of the peace process and is determined to continue playing its full part, enhancing it in all its aspects. Furthermore, recognizing the importance of a sound economy to social and political stability among the Palestinian people, the European Union will continue its considerable economic and technical assistance and looks to Israel to meet its responsibilities in promoting the conditions for economic development.